STATE OF UTAH GENERAL OUTLOOK
Jan 1, 2006

SUMMARY
What a difference a year makes! Last year as you recall, brought unbelievable snowpacks to southern Utah and the Uintah Basin. This year, snowpacks in the south are but a pitiful 16% of what they were last year. That is still 40% of average but a far cry from that record setting year. In the Uintah Basin, snowpacks are a respectable 105% of average, a good year to be sure, but far from spectacular. Winter of 2006 thus-far has seen a climatic pattern that has favored northern Utah over its southern counterpart, a reversal of last year's pattern. Snowpacks on the Bear, Weber and Provo range from 123% to 141% of average. The late summer and fall of 2005 were very warm and dry. This combination has reduced soil moisture values in water producing areas substantially compared to last year, 11% to 43% less. The Provo (28% less), southeast Utah (28% less) and southwest Utah (43% less) have the greatest overall reduction in soil moisture values compared to last year. Overall, soil moisture values range from 27% to 55% of saturation in the upper 24 inches of soil. The mild temperatures that have occurred over most of this winter have impacted lower elevation snowpacks, even in the north. These lower elevations typically have values ranging from 60% to 100% of normal, or as low as 16% in the southern areas. Precipitation for December was much above normal at 147%. Northern Utah ranged from 134% to 181% and southern Utah had 77% to 137% of average. This brings the seasonal precipitation, (Oct-Dec) to 107%. Low reservoir storage is becoming less of a concern with total reservoir storage at 65% of capacity, up 27% from last year. The area of greatest drought concern is the Bear River with current reservoir storage at only 22% of capacity. In general, most areas of the state have excellent reservoir carryover. General water supply conditions are near average and have been improving over the past year. Streamflow forecasts range from 21% to 123% of average. Surface Water Supply Indices range from 21% on the Bear River, to 84% on the Provo.

SNOWPACK
January first snowpacks as measured by the NRCS SNOTEL system range from 40% in southwest Utah to 141% on the Bear River Watershed, a complete reversal of last year. Northern snowpacks are similar or in the case of the Bear, higher than last year. Low elevation snowpacks are below normal pretty much statewide. Snowpacks also tend to have higher densities than a typical January, due to the mild temperatures and relatively warm storms. While there is still a large portion of winter yet to come and any outcome is still possible, this could be another decent water supply year.

PRECIPITATION
Mountain precipitation during December was 147% of average statewide. Precipitation was lower in southern Utah (77%) and much higher in the north (181%). This brings the seasonal accumulation (Oct-Dec) to 107% of average statewide. A dry fall and early winter has reduced soil moisture values considerably and this could negatively impact spring runoff.

RESERVOIRS
Storage in 41 of Utah’s key irrigation reservoirs is at 65% of capacity. This is an increase of 27% from last year. Reservoirs across the State have been making steady gains in storage. Bear Lake really is the last reservoir to remain in an extremely low condition due to the prolonged drought. Some of the other large reservoirs such as Utah Lake (97%) and Strawberry (76%) have made significant recoveries.

STREAMFLOW

Snowmelt streamflows are expected to be below average to above average across the state of Utah this year. Forecast streamflows range from 21% on Recapture Creek near Blanding to 123% of average for East Canyon Inflow. Most flows are forecast to be in the 60% to 110% range. Overall water supply conditions are improving.